

## Charles Town potential heritage tourism Mecca

The significant role that the Jamaican Leeward and Windward Maroons played in the resistance to British slavery is well documented, and was to influence other rebellions in the Western Hemisphere, including the Haitian Revolution that resulted in the creation of the first black republic.

The lands on which the descendants of these Maroons live are Maroon lands, and though there are not many physical vestiges of the original Maroon settlements, the fighting spirit of the indomitable Maroons is alive in Accompong Town in St Elizabeth, Flagstaff in St James, Scotts Hall in St Mary, Moore Town and Charles Town in Portland.

While Accompong is the most well known of the Maroon towns, the story of Charles Town is no less colourful, and its reputation as a heritage tourist destination is gathering momentum. Located a few miles from the coastal town of Buff Bay, Charles Town is steeped in Maroon heritage. A visit to Charles Town takes you back to the past, and for me it is always a time of reflection. But how did Charles Town get its name, and how did it come to sit in such a revered place in Maroon history.

Because the Maroons were always on the run, evading and strategising against the British, they were not settled in any one place. They used the rugged mountains and valleys, and dense vegetation in eastern Jamaica to outfox the clueless British soldiers.

After Captain Quao, military leader of the Windward Maroons, signed the June 23, 1739 peace treaty with the British, the question of where the Maroons would settle permanently became an issue, and the rumoured disagreement that Quao had with Nanny was brought to the fore. The Windward Maroons were to eventually split into two factions.

One group went with Nanny to settle on lands given to them by Governor Edward Trelawny at a place now known as Moore Town. The others went with Quao to live at Crawford Town. In 1754, because of the outbreak of violence in Crawford Town, the governor, Admiral Charles Knowles, removed them to an area three miles below Crawford Town. Named for the governor, Charles Town was born on 206 1/2 acres of land.

### REPLETE WITH HISTORY

The Charles Town Maroon Museum is replete with artefacts that eloquently tell the story of the Maroons' struggles and victory over the British. Part of the Asafu Yard complex, the museum, sponsored by the Culture Health Arts Sports and Education Fund, is chock-full of books and other documents and publication on the Maroons, among other things. The Asafu Yard also has a big courtyard, a covered stage for cultural events, and a bammy-making facility.

For the last three years, Charles Town has been hosting an annual Maroon convention, which has been growing from strength to strength. It is very popular with local and international scholars, who converge to present papers on the Maroon history and heritage, and the challenges that they face. The convention, held to commemorate the anniversary of Quao's signing of the peace treaty, is an excellent event to get a taste of traditional foods, and be immersed in Maroon

drumming, singing and dancing.

Apart from the convention, there are regular educational tours and cultural presentations. A tour of the region takes visitors to Sambo Hill, which is "loaded with history", according to Colonel Lumsden; Quao's riverside village; the ruins of an 18th-century coffee plantation; Granny Nanny Cave, and the old Maroon cemetery.

Source: [hospitalityjamaica](http://hospitalityjamaica)